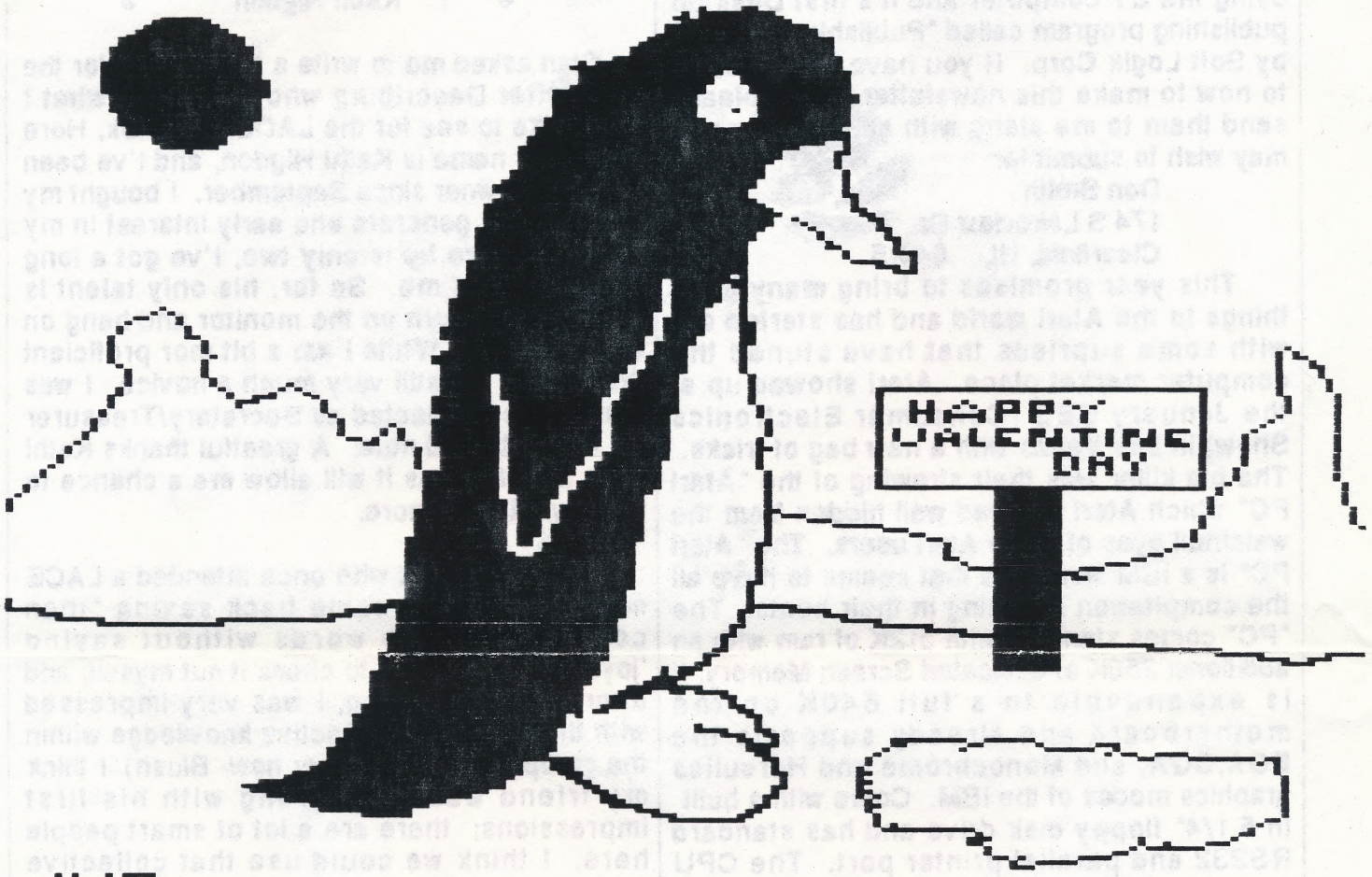
VOL 4. NO 2. FEBRUARY 1987

LACE

LAYTON ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS



JVD

LACE is the newsletter of The Layton Atari Computer Enthusiasts and is published monthly. Members are encouraged to submit articles or reviews of Atari software and hardware.

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Editors Edits

Welcome to the start of another new year with L.A.C.E.. As you might have noticed the newsletter has taken on a entitely new look that we hope will be acceptable to all of you. I have taken on this task for the Club in hopes of upholding the LACE image and providing a new look at what these fine computers are capable of. This News letter is being written and edited using the ST computer and it's first Desktop publishing program called "Publishing Partner" by Soft Logik Corp. If you have any ideas as to how to make this newsletter better please send them to me along with any articles you may wish to submit to:

Don Smith
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This year promises to bring many good things to the Atari world and has started out with some suprises that have stuned the computer market place. Atari showed up at the January CES (Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas with a new bag of tricks. The big killer was their showing of the "Atari PC" which Atari has had well hidden from the watchfull eyes of all us Atari users. The "Atari PC" is a IBM workalike that seems to have all the compitetion sweating in their boots. The "PC" comes standard with 512K of ram with an additional 256K of dedicated Screen Memory, it is expandable to a full 640K on the motherboard and already supports the EGA,CGA, and Monochrome and Herculies graphics modes of the IBM. Come with a built in 5 1/4" floppy disk drive and has standard RS232 and parallel printer port. The CPU (which is a 8088) runs at 8mhz and 4.77mhz. Has a socket built in for the 8087 math coprocessor and also has a built in Microsoft compatable Mouse. From reports from several people that saw it at the show, it looks like Atari has finally got into the Business end of the Computer market. (Sounds of great cheering in the Background).

Atari also released 3 new versions of their famous ST line of computers with the name "Mega ST" the three versions come in 1, 2, and 4 meg memory configurations. ATari said that the new ST's were designed with all the suggestions from all the ST users. ie. anything that had been told to Atari that we wished were there has be put in. And I think they got just about everything we wanted too. The new ST's come with 320K of internal Rom, the Bitblit chip, a fully accessable 68000 Buss connector, Detatchable ergonomic keyboard, ability to upgrade memory to a full 16 meg and a smaller overall size and still hold on to the "Power without the Price". The "Mega ST 1" is reported to have a price of around $1000 and the "Mega ST 4" of less than $1500.

Great Job Atari!!

And now a word from our money Lady

$ Kathi Higdon $

Stan asked me to write a short piece for the newsletter Describing who I was and what I would like to see for the LACE club. Ok, Here goes: My name is Kathi Higdon, and I've been a 1040ST owner since September. I bought my computer to generate and early interest in my son, but since he is only two, I've got a long haul ahead of me. So far, his only talent is being able to turn on the monitor and bang on the keyboard. While I am a bit mor proficient than that, I am still very much a novice. I was thankful to be elected as Secretary/Treasurer for the club, (Ed note: A greatful thanks Kathi from the club) as it will allow me a chance to use my ST a lot more.

I have a friend who once attended a LACE meeting, and he came back saying "then couldn't say two words without saying 'joystick'". I decided to check it out myself, and after my first meeting, I was very impressed with the amount of collective knowledge within the group. (Ed: All together now- Blush) I think my friend was very wrong with his first impressions; there are a lot of smart people here. I think we could use that collective knowledge to learn how to work these pretty and expensive little machines. I would like to see our meetings broken up into workshops, perhaps an 8-bit group and an ST group. This would utilize our time to the best advantage, and we could learn a lot. After all, isn't that the purpose of a user's group? Another suggestion I have is this: Each month, assign someone (within their respective workshop) to talk about a certain piece of software, and how' to get the most out of it. They could have an entire month to work on it, and everyone would benefit from that experience.

These are some ideas I have had for the club. Ihope you like them, and I hope we can expond on them. To me, a computer is a lot more than a place to store recipes and write letters. Thanks for your support. I'm looking forward to a great year.

REVIEW

The Star NX-10 Printer
by Richard D. Clarke Jr.

There I sat with a Atari 130XE, Sakata Monitor, an Atari 1050 Disk drive, and several boxes of disks. But Alas! **NO PRINTER !!** The need was for a multi-use, multi-function printer that a novice, mental midget, know nothing, like me could use. Something that could be bought, unboxed, plugged in and tell it ot print lots of stuff for me, right now, yet produce professional looking graphics. We had Print Shop, Print Shop Companion and Atari Writer Plus software. With two teenage daughters that wanted to use word processing for their school work assignments.

Then came modern technology to the rescue: the newest kid on the Star Printer block, the "NX-10". It is ecomonical, ($215 plus shipping -- December issue of Compute Magazine) or $239.00 plus $9.67 shipping from MicrOtyme. Very compact 16 1/2 inches wide, 14 1/2 inches front to back, 4 1/2 inches high. Ligh weight, under 10 lbs. Fast too, 120 characters per second. Easy to use: with it's front touch panel controls that allows for print sizes 80, 96, 136, characters per line NLQ 80 characters per line, bold, italic letter style, paper feed regular, bi-directional micro feed, two test functions,plus being able to set left and right margins. All this without any keyboard commands.

Since this purchase in November of 1986, we have done it all and have yet to find anything that this printer can't do. I still don't know any keyboard commands. You can tell your Print Shop Software it is a SG-10/15; tell your Atari Writer Plus it is choice "E" Atari---1029; and tell your JACS Print Shop Master Disk Index it's an Epson Pro Writer. It uses a continous loop, self renewing cloth ribbon cartridge ($8.95 ea. at present). I'm still using my first ribbon cartridge two months later.

|| Quiz ||

How many programers does it take to change a lightbulb?

Answer found else where in this issue.

NO TITLE NOTES

All right,now your wondering why I gave my article this title. Its because I couldn't decide what to name it. I didn't want to name it Sec/Tres. notes because I want to say somethings as Assistant Editor and I couldn't call it something with Editor because the reverse is true. Confused? Oh well,I am too.

For those of you who didn't attend our last meeting,you may have noticed by the title page that the officers have changed. That's right elections were last month. The new officers are as follows:

President:..... Stan Mann
Vice-President:. David Young
Sec/Tres:..... Kathi Higdon
Librarian:..... Mike Cardon
Editor/Asst:..... Don Smith
Karen Rasmussen
Sysop/Asst:..... Susan & Don Wilhelm

As you can see we have a whole new group of people for the executive committee. There is going to be a lot of new ideas put into action so all of you who have become bored with the club don't give up. Come to the next couple of meetings and give it another try you might see a real improvement.

Well thats enough as your past Sec. now on to new things,Asst. Editor. We would like to see the newsletter become more helpful to you our readers. We need you to write articles reviewing programs for both computers,8 and 16 bit.

Also we would like to know what you use your computer for. Business,word processing,school,education,etc...whatever you use it for write an article about it. Maybe you will be able to help someone else make better use of their machine. Have you heard of or seen any new pieces of hardware? Write about it we want to know about it too. This group was formed to help each other use our computers,so lets get helping. Yes even you can help someone else. There is always someone who knows a little less then you. What I'm trying to say is there is alway something you can write about,because there is always someone who doesn't know what you know. I hope this gets some of you motivated,we really would like to get this club off on a fresh start.

Magic Sac
(Macintosh Emulation)
By Mike Cardon

I am sure that many of you have been wondering about the MacIntosh emulator. Don has asked if I would write a little blurb about it, however, I would refer most questions to him. He has more experience with it and has even transferred programs directly from the Mac to the ST.

The cartridge comes in a little brown paper sack (play on words I'm sure) there is an instruction manual and a brochure also in the package. The cartridge comes packaged without any Mac Roms per Data Pacific's agreement with Apple and in fact unless the dealer you purchase it from sells the Mac Roms it will be up to you to provide them. The manual explains how to remove the Roms from a Mac and how to install the Roms into the ST. It is not difficult but be aware that some of the earlier shipped units have an error in the manual of where to place the Roms in the Cartridge. The board is stenciled correctly but if you are not sure ask either Don or myself.

The cartridge works as has been stated in numerous magazine articles since it was first displayed. It has an internal battery backed-up clock and is mounted in a standard ST cartridge case. It should be noted that it requires a monochrome monitor. I don't believe that a color one will be forth coming because the Mac is not color. Many programs run on it and Data Pacific is stating a 75% compatibility. I'm sure that Data Pacific has tested a lot more software than Don, however from the software that both Don and I have tried we feel of the most practical software maybe 40-50% will run.

When the Magic Sac is booted up the familiar Mac welcome screen appears but is a little bit wider and a little bit taller than the Mac screen. It is quite impressive to see that come up on the ST. If you have a one meg machine you will have the equivalent of a Mac + plus (about 900K). After seeing how it runs with two drives at Dons, I am convinced that it would be best to have two drives, otherwise when the emulation dies (which it does frequently), you have to go through the whole boot-up process again.

It's nice to have some of the capabilities of the Mac, particularly the desk top publishing (yes Mac Publisher does work). There is one more catch to this however, and that is; that the only printer driver that comes with all of this is the Imagewriter. So unless you have an Imagewriter connected to your ST you can not get any hard copy from it. Don and I are hot on the trail of an Epson printer driver, but as of this writing have not definitely found one.

Well that is a quick run down. I have been asking myself lately and you should too if you are contemplating purchasing a Magic Sac, do I really need this? and more importantly; do I need this if, as it appears, the ST software publishers will eventually be publishing software equal in sophistication to the MacIntosh?

!!! NEWS FLASH !!!

As of Jan 1987 Data Pacific has released a Beta test version 3.5 of the Magic Sac software. This version does indeed support the Color Monitor and fixes several features(Bugs) in the earlier versions. Data Pacific has informed us that there will be a final version (Version 4.0) with in a few weeks. Can't wait to see it.

Editor

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

TACANGLE (*tak' ang ul)*
n. The position of one's head while biting into a taco.

SLOVERTURE (*slow' vur chur)*
n. The distorted music which begins every educational movie.

SKIVLINES (*skiv' lynz)*
n. The red or blue lines around Jockey shorts that make them resemble fine china.

NEGLINTICS *(ne glin' tiks)*
n. The study of why dark lint ataches itself to light clothing and vice versa.

RETINUS PIGMENTOASTUS
(reh' tih nus pig men tos' tus)
n. Condition of being misled by the tinted window on a toaster oven into thinking something is "done".

MANGLAZETTE *(mang la zet')*
n. The newspaper at the top of the stack that everyone passes over, believing the ones beneath it have better or fresher news.

ROGERLAND *(rah' jer land)*
n. The netherworld from which highway patrolmen suddenly materialize.

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

VICE REPORTS

Or a look from the inside
by david young

WELL, I guess I'm it. Thanks to all the people that voted for me. [and thanks to those that didn't, haha.]

A little back ground on myself would be in order for those of you that don't know who I really am. I'm 35 getting close to 36. Before getting involved with computers, I spend 9 years of my spare time DRAG RACING a SS/K Nova (super stock k class). After selling the race car my wife bought us an Atari 400 game machine. She was in firm belief that I couldn't put a High Lift Cam and Headers on it.

It's four years later and I have proved her wrong. First I installed a real keyboard (an INHOME B-KEY), then 48k memory (a home brew Claus Buchholz upgrade). I also bought an 800XL and installed 256k (also a Claus upgrade), and a BOSS XL OS. Both my 1050 drives have ICD's U.S. DOUBLERS installed. So I guess I have a full race system.

I am as the above has stated an 8-bit user. I will most likely be an 8-bit user for a long long time. The ST is a very fine machine, but in all honestly the things I need to do with a computer can be done on the computers I already have. So being a cheap skate, well you get the idea.

Now for the real topic at hand. What does the group need to keep an active membership. What can we do to keep you interested enough to come out to the meetings and give Stan Mann and myself some direction to follow. I don't want the meeting to become the Stan and Dave Show. Please come out and give us a hand. Don't be afraid to ask a question.

I have an idea to get a little interest going. I am willing to start a New Users SIG. This SIG is not as the name would suggest. It will be for anyone that has an Atari 8-bit that is interested in getting more use out of his machine. This would not only be for the new owner that wants to now how to do more than run commercial software, but also for the old user that wants to learn how to use it to its fullest. I would dare say that anyone that gets a new piece of software or hardware is a new user all over again.

Well, enough for now, got to save some for next month. ALSO I WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED ON THE PROGRESS OF THE WASATCH FRONT ATARI FEST COMING IN APRIL.

BYE.

L-A-C-E IS UP!

The LACE BBS is up and running...for a whole week now! So far we have had 150 callers...are you one of them? I know there are a lot of you out there who have modems. When we asked, "Who has a modem?" A lot of you raised your hands...why haven't you called? Could it be that you didn't know the phone number? Could it be that you didn't know the board was up? Well, if those were your excuses then we have the solution right here...right now. Get out your paper and pencil...put this number in your memory banks.

546-2202

Did you get that? 546-2202.

Now you have no reason for not calling.

We have changed a few things. We hope you'll like. We have four message bases. The first one is the PARTY LINE. This base is for general chit-chat and such. Everybody can use this. Atari and non-Atari (if you can imagine) The second is the HELP LINE. This is for questions and answers. Third we have the HOT LINE! This one is for what's new...what's your favorite...good books...movies...FOOD! Last we have the PRIVATE LINE for all those secret, private things we don't want everybody to see! We tried to incorporate a little of our personalities into the board. Call it right now. If you don't have a modem...run out and buy one...tell 'em I sent you!!!

Call now and join the fun.

SuZQ and Don

Presidential Ramblings

of Stan Mann

First off I would like to thank everybody for voting me into office. I'm looking forward to the coming year, with much excitement and anticipation. Next let's give the former officers a THANK YOU for all the time and effort they gave us last year.

Now a little background on (you guessed it) me. I've owned an ST for a couple of years now, and have mostly worked with Megamax C. My main interest is learning Languages, to help me tailor applications for myself and others. That's nuff about me.

I've been talking to quite a few of the folks from LACE, and I keep getting the same thing, most everybody tells me that the meetings are leaving a little to be desired. Everybody wants to see the club start taking a different direction. I sat down and thought what can I do, then I remembered why I joined LACE last year. I joined so I could learn more about my computer and just to LEARN. I wasn't sure what I wanted to learn, I just wanted to see some demo's, some Homegrown applications, ect. We'll I've got a few ideas of my own, but remember these are just my ideas, and this is OUR club we need some input from everyone... Also I may be an ST owner and know very little about the 8 bits, but Dave Young our VP is an avid 8 bit owner. So you see, we will be covering both the 8 bit and the ST equally.

Here's a short rundown of how I would like to see our meetings go: First off, we'll have Kathi Higdon give us a quick review of our previous meeting. Next we'll take a FEW minutes and cover Club Business & New News, ie. like the Atari Fest, and CES in Las Vegas. Next we'll take a few minutes and cover any questions and comments from everyone, ie. what you would like to see happen in the meetings, software reviews, learn how to use certain hardware or software ect. Then comes the MEAT of the meetings, I'd want to see some WORKSHOPS (Demo's), both 8 bit in one area and the ST in another. I would like to see these ran not just as a show and tell, but rather as an open forum, questions and answers. But remember the meetings will not become any more interesting and we can't possibly cover the topics you are want unless we get your input.

There are two items I would like you to give a few minutes of your time and ponder over. First think of what you would like to see in the Workshops. If it's Demos, what kind? If you have some certain pieces of software but just can't get the hang of, let me know. I'll find someone that can help out. I realize there are a lot of you that are just like me and don't like to be the center of attention, even if it's just to ask a question. Well my phone number is listed on this newsletter. Give me a call and give me your comments, I'll be glad to talk with ya. Second, but not 2nd in importance, we need some MORE MEMBERS, no I'm not going to start a membership drive. I just feel that we all are one another resources, the more members, the more information we will have available to us. I've talked to all of the officers and they are all just as excited as I am, there's lot's of new and exciting things that are going to happen this year. So let's all try and bring a friend or two. They don't have to join right off the bat, but with all the new things LACE has to offer, it won't be long until they do.....

Stan Mann

No Bugs Allowed

GFA BASIC (ST)

For further information contact: Gordon Monnier President, MichTron Inc.

For immediate Release: GFA BASIC by GFA Systemtechnik

MichTron is pleased to announce the release of GFA BASIC. GFA BASIC was developed by our friends in Germany, GFA Systemtechnik. MichTron is delighted that we can continue to bring you dynamic and useful programs from both home and abroad. Besides this package from Germany, we are currently releasing new programs from England, Scotland, and France.

GFA BASIC is a high level language for the Atari ST that is as easy to program as BASIC yet offers full access to system features and an execution speed that rivals assembly language.

The concept behind the development of GFA BASIC was not to make further minor improvements in BASICs programming language but to develop a totally new form of BASIC which would meet the following criteria: structured programming should be made possible in its entirety, everyone who has programmed in BASIC should be able to use the new Interpreter in the shortest time possible, and the advantages already present in BASIC should be found in the newly developed BASIC.

GFA BASIC offers the user a BASIC Interpreter which, apart from entirely fulfilling the before mentioned conditions, also offers the user other advantages. The GFA BASIC Interpreter is very compact; it uses only 55 KBytes of 'precious' memory on your ATARI ST. The Interpreter has an extremely fast processing speed; it needs less than half a second to carry out an empty FOR-NEXT loop 10,000 times.

GFA BASIC also makes structured programming possible. In order to do this, several additional structure commands were added to the list of BASIC commands. For example: DO ... LOOP, WHILE ... WEND, REPEAT ... UNTIL, and PROCEDURE (with local variables) were among those added. It was considered necessary to limit the amount of commands to one per line to keep the structure of the program simple. The functions which, GFA BASIC is capable of, can be differentiated by two types: numerical and character string functions, depending upon whether the result of the operation is a number or a character string. There are two types of character string operators: those character strings which are linked by the function + and the character string functions LEFT$, RIGHT$, MID$, SPACE$, STRING$, and STR$. The numerical operators can be divided into four categories: Arithmetic functions, Comparison functions, Logical functions, and Numerical functions. When programming with GFA BASIC you will be using two screens which can be used independently of one another. One is the Editor screen which you will see on the command line at the top of the screen. The other is a display screen which shows the results of the program commands which have been entered. This excellent, full-screen editor includes word processor-style features such as search and replace, block copy, move, delete, and more.

GFA BASIC is capable of incorporating the features found in GEM including windows, drop-down menus, and alert boxes. Various menu commands let you handle GEM drop-down menus with ease and efficiency. Four mouse commands makes using the mouse a snap. Other key words allow for the easy use of windows and alert boxes.

GFA BASIC offers everything found in conventional BASICs plus much more. GFA BASIC resembles Modula-2 or Pascal code with the ability to accept parameters from the main program as well as using local variables. Line numbers are eliminated in favor of meaningful labels, and subroutines take the form of procedures which are called by name. Also, the various menu commands lets you handle GEM drop-down menus with ease and efficiency.

Two impressive features of GFA BASIC are the EXEC and C: commands. EXEC allows you to load and execute a non-BASIC ST application from within a BASIC program. The C: command calls a routine written and compiled in C. Both commands purport to allow full parameter passing. GFA BASIC also supports the unary * operator for C-style pointer operations. Together these capabilities pave the way for an intriguing sort of program which efficiently blends BASIC code with program modules written in other languages.

GFA BASIC sports an abundance of new graphic commands, along with Unix-style DOS functions, and a host of additions to the keywords already offered by ST BASIC.

GFA BASIC not only demonstrates what BASIC can be on the ATARI ST but it points the way to an entirely new sort of BASIC - one that's able to reach beyond its own confines and incorporate routines from other languages, actually stretching the definition of BASIC itself.

GFA BASIC is available through MichTron at the low price of $79.95. MichTron is proud to welcome GFA BASIC into its family of computer programs.

FILE MANAGER +

This program is an old one and I do not think that you can buy it anymore. However, I think it is a data base that has not been given it's proper chance.

I am using it as an index for my disk, making weddings and address files, and as a collectable stamp inventory.

The largest problem I had with the inventory of the stamps was that it requires an alphanumeric sort to get them catalogued properly. I found that I could fool the machine. I have a print field that prints the catalog number with it's alpha extender. The alpha extender very seldom exceeds "J", therefore I use a sort field where I use all numerics. For example if the stamp's catalog number is 1344a, I would enter 1344.1 in the sort field.

The only thing I do not like about this program is that the numeric and money amount fields are not variable. They are set at 14 characters per field and cannot be changed. This may be the reason for it's demise, because these set fields that take up a lot of memory.

As with any of the programs, the documentation is at times inadequate. The writers assume that you know as much as they do when they write. I think that at times half of the documentation remains in the head of the programer.

One of the things that I find helpful is my LACE club membership. If when you have tried, tried, and tried, walked around the block, "'&%@'%$#"#, there is usually someone in the club that can help. Thanks to Don and Sue Wilhelm, Don Smith, Sue Coleman, Dave & Virginia Crowther...etc. etc.

If you do not have this program or you have shelved it. Contact me or dust it off and give it another chance. I think the main limitations is the operator and his reluctance to experiment.

Quhid Izatt
544-4399

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Atari at CES -- Winter 1987
A sneak preview of what's new.

(Las Vegas -- January 7) -- The motto of Tramiel's Atari Corporation has just been updated. Instead of "Power Without The Price," Atari's battle cry is "Where the Action Is."

The action started with three major hardware announcements from Atari.

First is Atari's introduction of the new "Mega" ST series.

Atari has altered their 16-bit product line in both features and styling. The new STs are component systems, similar in appearance to an IBM PC, but less "clunky" -- they bear a sleek micro-stereo component look. A detachable keyboard connects via cable to a separate box housing the CPU, an included double-density 3 1/2 inch drive and a battery-sustained real-time calendar clock. Cosmetically, the Mega STs are the same dove-gray ST color, the separated keyboard resembling a 1040 ST with the diagonal vent area sliced off.

The keyboard, by the way, has a much crisper feel to it than current ST keyboards, although key layout and the keytops themselves remain unchanged.

The new STs are designed as "open architecture" machines. Expansion devices such as add-on cards might be plugged lo which would then connect to the ST through the DMA port or bus expansion connector. In the future, such a box could feature dedicated chips, such as the new Motorola 68020 and the 68881 math coprocessor, giving blinding speed to graphics processing, real-time animation and other memory intensive, number-crunching functions. The Mega STs will be available in 1, 2 and 4 megabyte configurations, with prices reportedly starting at around $995. And yes, the Mega STs come with the blitter chip built in.

The second major announcement was the Atari ST Desktop Publishing System. An Atari ST "host" computer will serve as the front end for a laser printer "engine." As of this writing (Wednesday night, before CES officially opens) the manufacturer of Atari's laser printer has not been identified. (Perhaps Atari will name names at their press conference at 9:00 Thursday morning.) However, John Skruch at Atari told Antic Publishing the manufacturer was "one of the three biggest names in the laser printer business." The Atari laser printer promises virtually typeset quality electophotographic print technology with a 300 dot-per-inch resolution.

A Phoenix From The Ashes.
Atari and The Winter 1987 CES

By Jon Bell and Matt Loveless , Editor, Consulting Editor, START Magazine

(Las Vegas -- January 8) -- "Now, in 1987, we are declaring war on the computer business in the United States."

These were the words of Sam Tramiel, as Atari kicked off the first day of CES with a 9:00 a.m. press conference at the Dunes Hotel.

"We are the number one computer in West Germany, in the home computer business and the personal computer business," he said, before adding that those interested could check with the German press and confirm that fact.

Atari's stance at the press conference wasn't merely confident, it was ruthlessly aggressive. The Tramiels made two points loud and clear: Atari Corporation has conquered overseas markets with its products, most notably the ST, and

has established a firm foothold as a major player in the personal computer industry. The second point: Atari has now fulfilled its financial obligations to its patient former parent, Warner Communications, and is now no longer shackled to Warner. Atari's stock offering gave it an infusion of cash which enabled it to pay off its loan from Warner. According to an article in the December 15, 1986 issue of Business Week, Jack Tramiel flew to New York City and presented Warner Communications officials with a check for $36 million, thu effectively closing down Atari's debt. (Late-breaking financial note: Atari's stock rose 2 1/2 points today, 17 1/2, up from 15. The stock has risen 6 points overall since it was first offered in November.)

Now completely free of the Warner mantle, Jack Tramiel has stopped looking over his shoulder at Atari's troubled past and is instead staring intently into his company's future. At the press conference, he reiterated his "Business is War" philosophy in no uncertain terms:

"The customer who supports my products knows what he wants. If you don't give him the right products at the right prices, he stops buying -- which is exactly what happened in 1985.

"Even giants, companies like IBM, have started to realize this and follow my footsteps, and keep reducing prices. That's the only way they can sell. And I'm not sure that they'll be able to catch up. . .

"IBM. . . gave their business to the Far East on a silver platter because their prices were so high. And they just allowed all those people to compete with them. We at Atari have no intention of following their footsteps. We will try to always have the most innovative products -- constantly coming up with new products at the right prices. . . The philosophy continues, the philosophy is successful."

THE MEGA ST SYSTEMS

"I introduced the first personal computer 10 years ago," said Jack Tramiel. "It was called the PET. It was a 4K machine. . . Today we announced a 4-megabyte machine."

From 4K to 4000K in 10 years is an incredible feat of technological revolution, and the new Mega STs represent another link in that evolutionary computer chain.

As we mentioned in our first report, the Mega STs will be sold in 1, 2 and 4 megabyte configurations. They feature detachable keyboards (with improved, crisper keyboard "feel"), a separate CPU box housing a double density 3 1/2 inch drive, built-in blitter chip, expansion bus and power supply, and use the new one-megabyte DRAMs. A mouse port and joystick port are in the back of the ST keyboard unit, near the center. The keyboard itself is attached with a length of coiled cable, using standard phone jacks.

The usual ST ports (DMA, MIDI, etc.) are arranged in the back of the CPU box. The box also serves as a monitor platform. Atari's new 20-megabyte hard disk fits in the same "footprint" as the CPU and can be placed between CPU and monitor, adding only another inch.

UNDER $1500 LASER PRINTER

Conventional laser printers offered by other companies require hundreds of dollars worth of microprocessor and support electronics. But the Atari ST's high-speed DMA port, coupled with the raw horsepower of the 68000 microprocessor, allows the ST to drive their new laser printer directly, thereby lowering the price. At the show, Atari announced a desktop publishing system, which will include a two megabyte Mega ST and an Atari Laser Printer, for less than $3000. The 300 dot-per-inch laser printer will also be sold separately for under $1500. A spring delivery date was announced.

In the Atari booth, a Mega ST2 (2-meg) was actually printing high-resolution, excellent quality press releases (about one per second), giving true meaning to the phrase, "hot off the press." Although Atari was reluctant to identify the manufacturer of the printer engine, experts recognized the show model as a Canon. The Canon engine is known for its low price. However, it supposedly has a limited print life. Also, it is good for small-quantity printing, but the per-copy price is relatively high. Antic Publishing was unable to determine if Canon will be the actual supplier for the final version. When asked at the press conference, Sam Tramiel identified the supplier as "Japan, Inc."

Within 90 days we may even see a laser printer development kit, allowing software to interface with virtually any laser printer engine. This will open the market for third party manufacturers, both high- and low-end, and make the Atari one of the most versatile (and inexpensive) desktop publishing systems around. For less than the price of a Macintosh, you can get a Mega ST2, an Atari Laser Printer, and the software to drive it.

THE ATARI IBM PC COMPATIBLE

As we mentioned in our first ANTIC ONLINE report, Atari has announced the first in a proposed series of IBM-compatible computers.

There will be two configurations of the Atari PC: a $499 version, with a IBM PC/XT-styled keyboard and the $699 version, which will include a "tri-sync EGA monochrome monitor." (The actual PC hardware is identical; only the packages offered are different.) The monitor has a 720 X 348 high-resolution display. Both computers come with mouse ports and mouse, built-in parallel, serial and SCSI ports, one 5 1/4 inch 360K disk drive (built into the CPU box), and 512K RAM expandable to 640K RAM. They also include 256K of dedicated screen RAM, which makes the entire 512K of system RAM available to developers. Atari will also market an expansion box which will accomodate up to five AT-sized add-on boards.

The Atari PC comes with (unheard-of) graphis support built in: EGA (enhanced graphics adaptor), CGA (color graphics adaptor), Hercules and IBM monochrome. With an EGA monitor, the PC will support 640 X 350 pixels resolution. Most EGA monitors retail for over a thousand dollars, however sources at Atari indicate they are working on an extremely low-priced EGA color monitor. You can also hook up a standard ST 3 1/2 inch disk drive and read and write IBM laptop disks, making the transferral of text files in that format an easy task. (Note: this does NOT mean you can run ST software on the Atari PC.)

Who makes the Atari PC? Unlike many of the compatibles on the market, Atari manufactures the PC in their 200,000 square-foot Taiwan plant, where they make all their equipment.

Atari officials quickly dismissed concern that their PC indicated any abandonment of their ST line. John Skruch of Atari likened the situation to a software house manufacturing products for differing computers: Atari is an electronics company specializing in computers, and their PC is simply an entrance into another market. (You should also consider that Commodore is showing both their standard Amiga and an IBM PC clone at CES. Commodore

has sold their clone in Europe for the last year or so, and are just now attempting to market it in the U.S.) "The importance of this machine," says Sam Tramiel, "is that someone can take it home, open the box, and be ready to run. You don't have to plug in cards or extra things; you have everything you need, right off the bat."

THE FUTURE ATARI

Looking forward, Jack Tramiel proffered the following to the press:

"We almost started believing the press -- about how bad it [Atari's viability] really was. Well, the press is wrong. It seems that the customers want to buy the right product at the right price. 1986... was a fantastic year, and 1987 will be much, much, much better."

Atari Announces New Products at CES

Las Vegas, NV, Jan. 8 -- In a dramatic press conference held this morning at the Consumer Electronics Show, spokesmen for the Atari Corporation introduced a panoply of new products for 1987. Highlights included three significant new additions to Atari's flagship ST line of high-performance personal computers, a revolutionary low-cost laser printer, and an IBM PC-compatible personal computer of radically new design.

The new ST computers, dubbed "Mega STs 1, 2, and 4" incorporate one, two, and four megabytes of RAM, respectively. Encased in a newly-designed system unit with integral 800K microfloppy drive and detachable, ergonomic keyboard, the new machines are visibly different from Atari's current 520ST and 1040ST models, while remaining 100% compatible with them. Additional enhancements to the Mega machines include a battery-backed realtime clock, internal mounting space for an additional circuit board, and full external routing of the 68000 bus, making their architecture "wide open" for further enhancements. "We took all our customer's suggestions on how we could improve the ST, and incorporated them in this series," said Neil Harris, Atari's Director of Marketing Communications. Delivery of the new machines, via computer specialty stores, is expected to begin shortly at a price-point of "about $1000."

The new Atari laser printer, shown in a prototype version, will match or exceed the performance of present laser printer systems while costing half as much -- about $1500. Atari has accomplished this enormous cost-saving by exploiting the power inherent in their ST computers. Coupled with a 4 Mega ST, the laser printer will form the output stage of a desktop publishing system costing less than $3000 total.

The new products -- perceived by some as the fulfillment of promises made over a year ago by Atari CEO Jack Tramiel -- are universally hailed as milestones for the Atari Corporation. One informed onlooker commented:

"It's as if Atari, in one fell swoop, had stepped to the leading edge in three markets: high-performance workstations, desktop publishing systems, and the lucrative PC-compatible game. They're going to be the company to watch in 1987."

With somewhat less fanfare, Atari also announced a new slimline 20-megabyte Winchester drive for its ST line, incorporating an extra port for daisy-chaining with other DMA-compatible peripherals, such as the new laser printer. At the same time, Atari announced price reductions on existing ST models. A 520ST CPU will now be available for under $300 retail, a 1040ST with monochrome monitor for around $799, and a 1040ST with color monitor for around $999.

By redesigning the standard laser printer to take advantage of the power latent in the ST line -- particularly the new Mega STs -- Atari hopes to make full-featured desktop publishing a reality at less than $3000 for a complete system; about what a conventional laser printer costs today. Designed to interface with the ST's high-speed DMA (Direct Memory Access) port and incorporating a standard laser "engine," the Atari laser printer will produce rapid throughput at 300 dots-per-inch resolution.

Though technical details have not yet been revealed, Shiraz Shivji, head of Atari's hardware engineering division, states that Atari "has designed an admirably flexible system that includes all the advantages and few of the disadvantages of present laser printer architectures. The printer will be able to handle multiple fonts and standard page-description languages at the discretion of software. Moreover, adapting present software to use the laser printer's full capabilities should be fairly simple, providing such software has been written in conformance with GEM standards."

The Atari PC -- "More than just another pretty clone."

Las Vegas, NV Jan. 8 -- In this context, it is less surprising that Atari has chosen to bring their special brand of competition where, for the moment, the competition is hottest. "We saw no reason to ignore the profits to be made in the IBM PC-compatible marketplace at this time." Says Neil Harris, Atari's Director of Marketing Communications, "especially since it is a different market than the one we are addressing with our high-end, flagship ST systems."

Presently, the PC compatible industry is moving in two directions. At the low end, a group of more-or-less anonymous clone makers are packaging "bare bones" systems for the mail-order market. Buyers of such machines often find that they must add several hundred dollars worth of extra hardware before their "bargain systems" can accomplish useful work. At the high end, clone makers such as Leading Edge and Compaq are providing more complete systems than IBM itself. At prices starting at around $1200 and up, however, these machines can only be considered bargains in comparison with the even higher cost of going with Big Blue.

In designing their PC, Atari management decided to run counter to both dominant trends. Instead, they reasoned that by applying new technology and old-fashioned manufacturing leverage, they could bring to market a fully-loaded, state-of-the-art system -- a "here's everything you'll ever need" PC -- at a price-point low enough to undercut even the "el cheapo" clone makers. They appear to have succeeded. Measuring about 22" square by only 2" high, the Atari PC system unit includes a built-in, half-height 5-1/4" diskette drive and

integral power supply. A second 5-1/4" drive or ST-style 3-1/2" drive, capable of reading disks in either ST or IBM format, can be attached externally. But that's just the beginning.

Thus, unlike competing PC-compatible systems, the Atari PC will be able to run PC GEM, Microsoft Windows, and mouse-based programs like Microsoft Word, right out of the box.

As one would expect, Atari has paid special attention the Atari PC's graphics capabilities. Most low-cost PC compatibles support only the IBM Monochrome mode, and are thus text-only systems. A few of the more expensive clones include IBM Color Graphics Adapter (CGA) and/or Hercules monochrome graphics capabilities. IBM Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) 640 x 350 x 16-color graphics capabilities have, in the past, only been accessible via expensive upgrades to a system's dislay circuitry and the purchase of costly high resolution monitors. Moreover, purchasers of the supposedly downward-compatible EGA enhancements have often been disappointed to discover that IBM-style EGA isn't as downward compatible as they hoped -- some CGA software won't run.

Yet, Atari has managed to shoehorn IBM Monochrome, CGA, EGA, and Hercules graphics capabilities into the Atari PC. Besides the fact that the Atari PC is the only PC-compatible to include EGA graphics as a standard feature, Atari's Shiraz Shivji notes: "our EGA is completely downward-compatible with CGA. As a result, users will experince no compatibility problems when using the lower graphics modes." What's more, Atari has announced a $200 monochrome greenscreen monitor for use with the Atari PC that can display all its graphics modes; including the high resolution EGA color mode, using intensity gradients (gray scales) to represent colors. This is the first monitor that incorporates these capabilities. "The monitor is intelligent," says Shivji, "and recognizes the frequency of signals coming from the combination video port, adjusting itself appropriately to display whatever kind of text or graphics the machine produces."

The Atari PC is virtually 100% compatible with software available for the IBM PC and XT. While its slimline housing provides no room for mounting internal circuit cards, it is doubtful that more than a handful of users will require more capabilities than the machine provides in its off-the-shelf configuration. For those who do, Atari intends to provide an external expansion box in the near future.

ST UPDATE

by Joe Walters and Frank Sommers

A reprint from "CURRENT NOTES"

Hardware News

Atari has several thousand of the long awaited hard drives piling up in warehouses. Target ship date was the end of May and drives should be in the stores by the time you read this.

Expect to see the ATARI 1200 baud modem late in June or Early July. Our sources indicate that the MS-DOS emulator has received FCC approval. The hardware seems to be in fine shape, but the software still needs tuning. Probably won't see this until the fall. The situation with the blitter chip is just the opposite. Software emulation of the blitter is done, but bugs still remain in the hardware. (Editors Note - The hardware prototypes of the Blitter chip are now working). If the chip makes it through the next production run, we might see this product in four to six weeks. No significant progress to report on the C-D ROM front ATARI still talking with potential suppliers.

A new monitor is on the way, the SP13000. This will be the same as the current monitor with one significant difference -- a built in disk drive.

Final price is not set but should be in the neighborhood of $500. The EST, the next generation ST will feature a very-high resolution monitor (1280 x 960?). However monitors with this kind of resolution, currently priced at about $1000, are very expensive. ATARI is searching the world to see if it can find a supplier who can make a more economical high resolution monitor. Don't look for the EST before, at best, early next year.

Hard drives, MS-DOS emulators, networks, color digitizers and other potential peripherals are all going to need access to the single DMA port. How are they going to get it? By using an OctaBUS. This device will provide four (or eight) additional DMA ports on the other end. Several 3rd-party manufacturers are working on such a product right now. Price will probably be between $100-$150.

THE END

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY

QUIZZ ANSWER:

None!

That's a hardware problem.

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